

## Musicians' Union (MU) Brexit Briefing – September 2019

The UK music industry is worth 142,208 jobs and £4.4 billion to the UK economy, and musicians, composers, songwriters and lyricists contribute £2 billion of that £4.4 billion.

Although there are a handful of very well-paid artists, the majority of musicians who make up this huge contribution to the economy are freelancers who earn far more modest figures: 78% of the Musicians' Union's (MU) 30,000 professional musician members still earn less than £30,000 per year.

These freelancers largely rely on live performance to make their money, and freedom of movement within the EU has given them easy access to audiences and gigs across 27 countries. Any Brexit deal which ends freedom of movement will threaten this work because even small increases in red tape and costs could make European tours unviable. Even established bands report to us that their European tours only just about break even as it is, and yet they are invaluable tools for building a fan base – something which is essential to sustain and build a career as a musician.

Musicians need to be able to work overseas free of extra burdens and added costs, and the MU has long argued that Brexit will damage the music industry. In fact, when the music industry (musicians, composers, songwriters, lyricists, producers and artist managers) were asked how leaving the European Union would impact on their ability to work in the music business, only 2% thought Brexit would have a positive impact next to 50% who said it would have a negative impact.

Since the government's own published Brexit forecasts show that the UK's economy will suffer under Brexit, it stands to reason that the music industry, one of the most successful areas of the economy, would also suffer. Under the chequers model it was estimated that the UK economy could be 3.9% smaller after fifteen years, with some economists estimating that this could equate to a loss of £100 billion per year by the 2030s. A proportionate effect on the music industry economy could be devastating both to the industry itself and to the country at large. Furthermore, given musicians' reliance on freedom of movement, the proportionate cost to the music industry could be significantly higher than the UK economy as a whole.

### **No-Deal Brexit**

A no-deal Brexit would be very bad news in the long term, and potentially disastrous in the short term. For example:

The CBSO has a 12-concert European tour with Yuja Wang and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla starting in mid-May 2019, taking in six countries (including Switzerland) in just over two weeks. As with most tours, there is the bare minimum of free days and travel time, with the finest of margins in terms both of the schedule and indeed the budget. Even if the worst of the predictions - planes not flying, lorries stuck in Kent, tariffs on fees (any of which would make most orchestral tours completely impossible) – are somehow avoided, the chances are that taking 100 people (from typically 15-20 different nationalities) will become significantly more expensive, complex and time-consuming.

Although orchestral tours etc will be negatively affected as above, the impact on the majority of musicians, as freelancers, could be even worse as their financial margins are slimmer and they do not have large organizations behind them to deal with any administrative issues. There is still no clarity on whether these musicians would be able to travel to Europe to work in a No Deal scenario. Freelance musicians are not in the position to be able to withstand even six months of uncertainty and reduced work. On a salary of £20,000 - £30,000, many musicians will simply go under.

The uncertainty of No Deal will inevitably lead to some hesitation between UK acts & their representatives and European bookers and promoters. And likewise, European acts and UK bookers/promoters. This will impact venues and festivals, particularly those with diverse and varied line-ups.

## **Brexit with a Deal?**

Any Brexit deal that includes the end of free movement for musicians will cause major problems in our industry. Some of our members visit several European countries over the course of a week, often with very little notice, and do this on a regular basis.

Orchestral touring opportunities beyond the EU have been growing in recent decades, reflecting the fact that classical music is actually a growth industry when looked at on a global scale. But these tours are always very costly and time-consuming to put together, not least because of the complex visa, carnet and paperwork requirements.

European touring has been much easier – with the ability to tour to 27 European countries without any need for visas or work permits for musicians or carnets (temporary export licenses) for instruments.

It also means that UK orchestras can recruit from a talent pool of over 500 million, while a large proportion of guest artists travel here on EU passports and can thus accept a typically poorly-paid (by international standards) week with a British orchestra without too much administrative hassle.

Even in the long term, the end of freedom of movement will make it more difficult and expensive for UK orchestras to tour in Europe. It could mean orchestras having to add more non-playing (and thus non-earning) days to each tour to deal with longer and more complicated movement. It could also end in European promoters deciding that booking British orchestras is just too much hassle.

The local music scenes that make up the UK's live sector are also reliant on touring acts, not just from other parts of the UK but from the further afield. Grassroots UK artists find their own fanbases and launch their careers by supporting touring acts and accessing their more established audiences.

The freedom of movement in the EU allows artists to explore Europe and identify relevant audiences for their music; it's not uncommon for an artist that is relatively unknown in the UK to have a keen following and established profile within another European country. Restricted access or administratively burdensome requirements (surrounding both artists and their goods i.e., merchandise) – as is already the case for other territories around the world – could easily put an end to UK artists touring EU countries, particularly at grassroots level. This would compound the existing concern as to who tomorrow's headliners are.

There's a vibrant cultural exchange between the UK and other EU countries that is facilitated by the freedom of movement. The close proximity of other EU countries to the UK makes touring viable, even at grassroots level. Artists who can access other musical communities, cultures and audiences will have a fuller understanding of where their music works and how to exploit all available revenue streams.

Many of the UK's music venues have international renown due to their diverse programming featuring local artists alongside those from all over the world. In addition to venues, there are several festivals across Europe that provide opportunities for UK acts at all levels. Allowing UK acts to be visible and successful throughout Europe strengthens the UK's cultural significance and contributes to incoming tourism.

Many of the MU's members recall gigging and touring in the days before the European Union, and if there is any return to those days then European touring will become unviable for an awful lot of artists.

Before the EU, musicians had to use travel carnets to show that they could temporarily move instruments and gear outside the country. An ATA carnet that covers 70 countries currently costs £325.96 plus a deposit and is valid for one year. This would be a prohibitive cost for many musicians, not to mention time consuming as equipment and gear would need to be checked at the border

We also know that visas could be a problem. They can take time and resources to get, and how much time and how much it takes is not always in our control. For example, 'fast-track' or premium processing fees for US visa applications have recently gone up from \$1225 to \$1410.

**It is worth noting that many musicians already 'leave out' Switzerland when organizing a European tour, because of the hassle of having to use carnets. Not only will the end of freedom of movement definitely reduce the number of musicians coming to tour in the UK, it will also increase costs and admin for our musicians going over there.**

## **What we need**

A touring visa for performers and their crew which:

- Is affordable and admin-light
- Lasts for at least two years
- Is multi-entry
- Covers all European Union member states
- Covers crew and equipment